

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05467 011710Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /057 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2978
INFO PANCANAL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 5467

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PN
SUBJECT: REACTION OF "OFFICIAL PRESS" TO ESCOBAR-ROYO PRESS
CONFERENCE

REF: PANAMA 5463

1. AS OFTEN HAPPENS WHEN THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT IS IN
THE PROCESS OF MAKING UP ITS MIND, THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED
NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN THROWN INTO NEUTRAL GEAR OVER THE WEEKEND.

2. SUNDAY'S "DOMINICAL" CARRIES A VERY DETAILED INSIDE-PAGE
REHASH OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE, AS WELL AS A TRANSLATION OF
PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER TO GENERAL TORRIJOS.

3. MONDAY'S "MATUTINO" AND "CRITICA" BOTH HAVE FRONT-PAGE
COVERAGE ON THE CANAL PROBLEM, BUT IN MINOR KEYS. CRITICA
CARRIES A STORY TRUMPETING A MEETING SCHEDULE TODAY AT 1:30
P.M. BETWEEN NATIONAL GUARD G-3 CONTRERAS AND SOUTHERN COMMAND
CINC GENERAL MCAULIFFE. CRITICA, HERETOFORE NOT ONE OF GENERAL
MCAULIFFE'S MOST VOLUBLE ADMIRERS, GIVES HIM AN UNEXPECTED
PAT ON THE BACK: "IT HAS BEEN KNOWN THAT GENERAL D. P.
MCAULIFFE HAS SUFFICIENT POWER AND AN EXCELLENT DISPOSITION
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TO DISCUSS THE VARIOUS CONCRETE ASPECTS" OF LANDS AND WATERS--
THE SUBJECT OF THE MEETING. MATUTINO CARRIES FOUR FRONT-PAGE
CANAL-RELATED STORIES WITH FOREIGN DATELINES--HAVANA, SAN JOSE,
MEXICO AND NEW YORK.

4. MONDAY'S CRITICA ALSO CARRIES AN EDITORIAL WHICH
PRIMARILY RESTATES, WITH APPROPRIATE UNDERLINING, THE

POINTS MADE BY ESCOBAR AND ROYO ON FRIDAY. MATUTINO'S EDITORIAL IS ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE SUBSTANTIAL. IT STATES THAT, FOLLOWING THE PRESS CONFERENCE, CRITICS CANNOT SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS HIDING THE FACTS FROM THE PUBLIC. IT DESCRIBES THE SITUATION AS ESSENTIALLY AMBIVALENT: "THE RESULTS OF THE NEGOTIATION BECAUSE OF THEIR COMPLEXITY CANNOT BE EVALUATED WITH A SIMPLE YES OR A FLAT NO". LIKE ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT, MATUTINO HAS "NEITHER OPTIMISM NOR PESSIMISM".

5. COLUMNIST CAMILO PEREZ IN MONDAY'S CRITICA INDULGES IN A BIT OF PARANOID SCHOLASTICISM. WHAT, HE ASKS, DOES CARTER MEAN WHEN HE SAYS THAT THE HISTORIC ADVANCES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE DUE TO TORRIJOS' PERSONAL LEADERSHIP? SHOULD ONE INFER THAT IT WILL BE TORRIJOS' FAULT IF THE NEGOTIATIONS FAIL? AND AS FOR THE GENEROSITY OF WHICH CARTER SPEAKS, PANAMA'S ARGUMENTS ARE BASED ON DEMANDS NOT CHARITY*

6. COMMENT: BOTH THE OFFICIAL PRESS AND THE STAR AND HERALD PAPERS HAVE AVOIDED SUBSTANTIVE COMMENTARY, EXCEPT FOR PEREZ' VACUOUS COLUMN. WITH SO MUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE, PANAMA IS BUZZING WITH EXPECTATION. BUT THOSE WHO EITHER SPEAK FOR THE GOVERNMENT (OR WANTS TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE NOT SPEAKING AGAINST IT) ARE STILL UNCERTAIN WHICH WAY TO JUMP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PRESS CONFERENCES, CANALS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197708110/aaaadpvy.tel
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